

Message Text

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14

ACTION NEA-10

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SAB-01 IO-10 /068 W

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R 060920Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7245

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, PFOR, PINS, SOCI, IS, JO

SUBJECT: GOI REVISES RULES FOR WORSHIP AT TOMB OF PATRIARCHS

REF: JERUSALEM 1194 AND 1214; TEL AVIV 4994

1. SUMMARY. NEWS MEDIA REPORT GOI PROMULGATION AUGUST 5 OF NEW REGULATIONS GOVERNING JEWISH AND MOSLEM PRAYERS AT TOMB OF PATRIARCHS (IBRAHIMI MOSQUE) AT HEBRON. UNDER NEW RULES SEPARATE HALLS RESERVED FOR MOSLEM AND JEWISH PRAYERS AND FORMER TIME LIMITATIONS ELIMINATED. THERE WILL BE SEPARATE ENTRANCES FOR JEWISH WORSHIPPERS AND MOSLEM WORSHIPPERS AND TOURISTS. SUPREME MOSLEM COUNCIL IN JERUSALEM HAS PROTESTED CHANGES AND JEWISH SETTLERS AT KIRYAT ARBA CONTEND THEY DO NOT GO FAR ENOUGH. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO AUGUST 6 JERUSALEM POST AND OTHER NEWS MEDIA, GOI CABINET AGREED AT AUGUST 4 MEETING TO CHANGE ARRANGEMENTS DATING FROM 1967 JEWISH AND MOSLEM WORSHIP

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AT TOMB OF PATRIARCHS (IBRAHIMI MOSQUE) IN HEBRON. NEW

REGULATIONS, BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF DEFMIN SHIMON PERES WHO VISITED SITE LAST WEEK, WERE PROMULGATED AUGUST 5. THEY PROVIDE FOR MOSLEM WORSHIP IN LARGE ("ISAAC AND REBECCA") HALL AND JEWISH WORSHIP IN TWO SMALLER HALLS ("ABRAHAM AND SARAH" AND "JACOB AND LEAH"). ALL TIME LIMITATIONS ON USE BY BOTH GROUPS ARE REMOVED, EXCEPT THAT, ACCORDING TO POST, THERE WILL BE NO JEWISH PRAYERS FRIDAY, MOSLEM HOLY DAY, UNTIL SUNSET, BEGINNING OF JEWISH SABBATH. JEWISH AND MOSLEM WORSHIPPERS WILL HAVE SEPARATE ENTRANCES, AS WILL TOURISTS WHO CAN ENTER ONLY WHEN NO SERVICES IN PROGRESS.

3. SUPREME MOSLEM COUNCIL IN JERUSALEM MET IN SPECIAL SESSION AUGUST 5 AND REJECTED NEW ARRANGEMENTS, STATING IT HOLDS TOMB TO BE MOSLEM MOSQUE IN ITS ENTIRETY. STATEMENT IS ISSUED CLAIMED NEW MEASURES CONTITUTED MOVE TOWARD TRANSFORMING SHRINE INTO SYNAGOGUE. COUNCIL CALLED ON MOSLEM IMAMS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY TO DEVOTE SERMONS NEXT FRIDAY TO THIS ISSUE.

4. RELIGIOUS LEADER OF JEWISH SETTLERS AT KIRYAT ARBA HAD COMPLAINED, ACCORDING TO ISRAELI RADIO, THAT WHILE STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION, NEW MEASURES DO NOT GO FAR ENOUGH TOWARD MEETING THEIR DEMANDS. SOME SETTLERS OBJECT TO FACT GOI HAS NOT TAKEN OVER SITE; OWNERSHIP REMAINS VESTED IN MOSLEM RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES.

5. COMMENT. JEWISH SETTLERS APPEAR TO HAVE SUCCEEDED THROUGH PROVOCATIVE ACTS IN ACHIEVING MAIN OBJECTIVE OF ACCESS TO TOMB FOR PRAYERS AT ANY TIME. THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THEY WILL NOW CEASE FURTHER EFFORTS TO GAIN ADDITIONAL PRIVILEGES. WHILE NEW ARRANGEMENTS REPORTEDLY WORK "SMOOTHLY" ON FIRST DAY, MOSLEMS ARE OBVIOUSLY AGITATED. HEBRON MAYOR SHEIKH MOHAMMED ALI JAABARI HAS SO FAR DECLINED TO COMMENT ON NEW ARRANGEMENTS ON GROUND THIS IS RELIGIOUS ISSUE TO BE HANDLED BY MOSLEM COUNCIL. HE HAS IN PAST PLAYED BASICALLY CONCILIATORY ROLE IN IDSPUTES OVER USE OF THIS HOLY SITE. HE MAY, HOWEVER, BE PRESSED BY MOSLEM FOLLOWERS TO TAKE A STRONGER POSITION ON THEIR BEHALF IN FUTURE.

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